Grace, proved to be at the ſovereign Diſpoſal of GOD:

IN A

DISCOURSE

Preached *July* 19, 1760,

AT THE

Reverend Mr BURFORD's Meeting, in a Monthly Exerciſe of Prayer, with a SERMON.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the Church.

By JOHN BRINE.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

DISCOURSE

DEUT. XXIX. 4.

Yet the Lord hath not given you an Heart to perceive, Eyes to ſee, and Ears to hear unto this Day.

MOSES obſerves to the People of *Iſrael*, that they had beheld the miraculous Works, which God had wrought, in a way of Vengeance on their Enemies, and in a way of Favour towards them, in order to their Deliverance out of *Egyptian* Bondage. How he had conducted, ſupplied, and defended them in the Wilderneſs in a miraculous manner. Though they had ſeen all thoſe *Signs, and great Miracles, yet the Lord had not given them an Heart to perceive, Eyes to ſee, and Ears to hear unto this Day.*

In diſcourſing on the Words, I propoſe to ſhew,

I. That theſe Phraſes, *an Heart to perceive, &c.* mean an Ability to diſcern in a ſpiritual manner, receive and delight in ſpiritual Things, becauſe of their

Excellency and Glory. And what that Ability is.

II. I would attempt to prove that there is ſuch an Ability in Believers.

III. That it cannot be acquired.

IV. That it is the Gift of God.

V. That he gives it to ſome and not to others, according to his ſovereign Pleaſure.

I. Theſe Phraſes, *an Heart to perceive, Eyes to ſee, and Ears to hear*, mean an Ability, in a ſpiritual manner, to diſcern, receive, and delight in ſpiritual Things, becauſe of their Excellency and Glory. Such a Perception, Embracement of, and Pleaſure in heavenly Things, are intended, as iſſue in the Glory of God, and the Salvation of the Soul. Whereof natural Reaſon is incapable, how much ſoever it may be cultivated and improved. This Ability, is not a Capacity to underſtand the Import of the Language of Scripture, concerning the moſt myſterious Doctrines which it contains. Such as the Doctrine of the Trinity; of the Incarnation of Chriſt; the Union of the Divine and human

human Natures, in his Perſon; of Regeneration; and of other ſublime Truths.

Nor is it a Power to diſcern the Dependence, Connection and Harmony, of evangelical Doctrines. Men in common are the Subjects of an Ability for the former, and of a Capacity for the latter; otherwiſe they could not be required to believe the Verity of thoſe Doctrines, which are ſupernaturally revealed. The Reaſon why Men do not believe the Truths of the Goſpel, is not the want of an Ability to underſtand the Language of Scripture, or of a Capacity to diſcern the Dependence, Connection and Agreement of evangelical Principles: But the Cauſe thereof is, they diſapprove of them, and account them to be the very Reverſe of what they are in fact. They are the Wiſdom of God; but in the Eſteem of natural Men, they are Folly, and therefore, unfit to be believed and embraced. On the contrary, they think they are to be deſpiſed and rejected, as irrational and abſurd. *The natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, to him they are Fooliſhneſs, neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned* (a). He is a *ſpiritual Man*, who *judges*, or *diſcerns* ſpiritual Things themſelves, and conſequently, he muſt be poſſeſſed of a ſpiritual Ability. And that Ability is, a holy ſupernatural Principle, whereof the whole Soul

(a) 1 Cor. ii. 14.

is the Subject, and it is permanent and abiding therein. From that Principle, all holy, ſpiritual Acts ſpring.

II. I would attempt to prove the Being of ſuch a Principle in Believers. And I ſhall argue from various Modes of Expreſſion, relating to its Production: And from the Repreſentation given of it, and Acts, which are aſcribed unto it.

1. I will argue from various Modes of Expreſſion, relating to its Production.

(1.) It is ſaid to be born, or ingenerated. *That which is born of the Fleſh, is Fleſh: That which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit (b). Whatſoever is born of God, overcometh the World (c). Which were born, not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Fleſh, nor of the Will of Man; but of God. The Wind bloweth, where it liſteth, thou heareſt the Sound thereof; but canſt not tell from whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: So is every one that is born of the Spirit (d).* No Acts, internal or external, can with any Propriety, be ſaid to be born. But a Principle, which is a Spring of Action, may be ſaid to be born, for it hath proper Subſiſtence in him, in whom it is produced.

(2.) It is a Vivification, or an Infuſion of Life into Men, who are dead in ſin. *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in Treſpaſſes*

(b) John iii. 6. (c) 1 John v. 4.
(d) John iii. 8.

Treſpaſſes and Sins (e). Life is a vital Principle. Death is no other than a Privation, or loſs of a living Principle. And therefore, quickening us, when dead in Sin, muſt mean the Communication of a Principle of Life. And, conſequently, there is, in Believers, a vital, holy, and ſupernatural Principle, from which proceed all their Acts of a holy ſpiritual Nature.

(3.) This Work is a Creation. *We are the Workmanſhip of God, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good Works (f).* By Reaſon hereof, the Saints are denominated new Creatures: *If any Man be in Chriſt Jeſus, he is a new Creature.* Acts are not created, they flow from that which previouſly exiſts. Creation is giving Being to ſomething, which had not Exiſtence before. And, therefore, this muſt mean the Production of a Principle in the Mind, which it was not the Subject of until this Time. From hence, it is evident, that there is in Believers, a holy ſupernatural Principle, which is a Spring of holy, ſpiritual, and ſupernatural Acts.

(4.) It is giving a new Heart. *A new Heart alſo will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you (g).* Acts cannot be denominated the Heart; but a Principle may, which is ſeated in the Heart; and the Heart is properly ſaid to be good, or evil, as that Principle,

(e) Eph. ii. 1, (f) Ver. 10.
(g) Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

ciple, whereof it is the Subject is good, or evil. The new Heart, which God gives, is certainly holy and good, and that is not Acts; but it is a Principle from which holy Acts take their rise. These Things, I think, very clearly prove the Being of a holy, supernatural Principle in Believers.

2. I will argue from the Representation given of it, and the Acts, which are ascribed unto it.

(1.) It is declared to be Spirit. *That which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit. The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh.* They are opposites, and contrary in their Nature. The Flesh is not Acts; but a Spring of Actions, which are evil. And its opposite, the Spirit, is not Acts; but a Spring of Actions, which are holy and spiritual. And, therefore, there is, in the Saints, a holy supernatural Principle.

2. It is an *Image*. Actions are not an Image; but a Principle is. This is an *heavenly Image. But we all with open Face beholding, as in a Glass, the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the same Image, from Glory to Glory (h).* It is the Image and Likeness of God. *For after God it is created in Righteousness and true Holiness (i). After the Image of Him that created him (k).* Acts internal, or external, with no Propriety, can be said to be

(h) 2 Cor. iii. 18. (i) Eph. iv. 24.
(k) Col. iii. 10.

be an Image, for they are transient and passing. An Image is not so. Hence we may conclude, that Believers, are the happy Subjects of a Principle, which is the Image and Likeness of God. And that Principle is holy, spiritual and supernatural.

(3.) It is a new Man, the contrary of the old Man. *And put ye on the new Man. And have put on the new Man.* The old Man is not Acts, either internal or external; but is a corrupt Principle, from which unholy Actions flow; And the new Man, is not Acts, either internal, or external; but a pure Principle, from which arise holy, spiritual Actions. As the former is a Principle, so is the latter. For, they are direct opposites. And therefore, there is in Believers, a holy, supernatural Principle.

(4.) It is called a Law of the Mind, and is the opposite of a Law, which is in the Members. *I see another Law in my Members, warring against the Law of my Mind.* The former Law, is not Acts, neither is the latter Law, Acts. Each is a Principle from which Acts proceed. The Law in the Members, is an evil Principle. The Law of the Mind, is a good Principle. Unholy Actions flow from the former, and holy Actions from the latter. This is, I think, a full Evidence, that there is, in Believers, a holy, supernatural Principle.

(5.) It

(5.) It is repreſented as a Nature. *That by theſe ye might be Partakers of the divine Nature (l).* By which muſt be intended, a holy, heavenly Principle. For, Acts internal, or external, are not a Nature. Spiritual and heavenly Acts, ſpring from this Nature, whereof the Saints are made Partakers. But that Nature they are not, nor can be. And, therefore, there is, in Believers, a holy, ſupernatural Principle. For, ſuch that muſt be, which is denominated, the divine Nature. Acts it cannot be, it, therefore, muſt be a Principle.

The Truth of this important Point, will farther appear, by taking into Conſideration, thoſe various Acts, which are aſcribed unto it. And in general, luſting againſt the Fleſh is attributed unto it. *The Fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the Fleſh (m).* This is very comprehenſive. For it compriſes all the holy Actings of the Mind, in oppoſition to the Dictates and Motions of the Fleſh. It is highly improper, to aſcribe Acts to Acts. For Acts do not flow out of Acts. They ſpring from a Principle. An evil Principle, if the Acts are evil: A good Principle, if the Acts are good and holy. It cannot reaſonably be thought, that the Fleſh, is a Principle, from which evil Actions ariſe, and that the Spirit is not a Principle, from which holy

(l) 2 Pet. i. 4. (m) Gal. v. 17.

holy Acts take their Riſe in the Saints. If the Fleſh is a Principle of Action, ſo is the Spirit. And therefore, there is, in Believers, a holy, ſpiritual, and ſupernatural Principle. There are particular Acts aſcribed unto it, *viz. Conſenting to the Law, that it is good. Delighting in it. And ſerving of it. I delight in the Law of God, after the inner Man (n). So then with my Mind, I myſelf ſerve the Law of God: But with the Fleſh the Law of Sin.* And the ſame Apoſtle obſerves, that *the Fruit of the Spirit, is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Faith (o).* There is, therefore, in Believers, a holy, ſpiritual, and ſupernatural Principle, from which all the holy and gracious Actings of their Souls do proceed.

This Principle, I have ſaid, is permanent and abiding. That it is ſo, may be concluded from the End of God, in creating, or infuſing of it. That End was the everlaſting Enjoyment of himſelf. *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who of his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively Hope, by the Reſurrection of Chriſt from the Dead, to an Inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in Heaven for you (p).* This Work upon Men, is *calling them to his eternal Glory (q).* And the Apoſtle *Paul*, ſpeaking of the State of fu-

 ture

(n) Rom. vii. (o) Gal. v. 22.
(p) 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. (q) Chap. v. 10.

ture Bleſſedneſs, ſays, *He that hath wrought us for this ſelf-ſame Thing is God (r).* Since God, in the Creation, or Infuſion of this Principle, which is our Meetneſs to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, really intended that we ſhould enjoy Himſelf hereafter, it is impoſſible, that this Principle ſhould ever become extinct. For, in that Caſe, He would be diſappointed of His End, in its Creation, or Infuſion. And it is to be obſerved, that the moſt vigorous Actings of Grace, in the Saints, expel not the Fleſh, and the moſt violent Actings of the Fleſh in them, expel not the Spirit. This is evident in *David* and *Peter*. *David*, in a very extraordinary manner, acted Grace, as we are informed, 2 *Sam.* vii. 18. to the End of the Chapter. His Soul was full of holy Adoration, ſteady Faith, and flaming Love, and Affection to God. *Is this the manner of Men? What can thy Servant* David *ſay more! Therefore have I found in mine Heart to pray this Prayer unto thee.* Did thoſe extraordinary Actings of Grace expel the Fleſh? No ſuch Thing. That kept its Poſſeſſion in the Soul of this holy Man. And, what is enough to make one tremble, ſoon after this, he acted the very worſt Part, that he ever did act, through the whole Courſe of his Life: So far was Sin from being expelled out of him. An Account is given of the evil Part

(r) 2 Cor. v. 5.

Part he did act, in the eleventh Chapter of the ſame Book. I need not name it, you well know what it was. On the other Hand, the violent Actings of the Fleſh in *Peter*, in the Denial of Chriſt, with very dreadful Aggravations, did not expel the Spirit. Grace did not become extinct in him. His Faith did not fail thereby. Chriſt had prayed, that it might not. He turned, and looked upon *Peter*, with a Look of Reproof, and Love, which ſtruck him with Awe, and wrought him up to a high degree of evangelical Repentance, for his great Offence. Hence, I think, it is clear, that as the moſt eminent Actings of Grace expel not Sin: So the worſt Actings of Sin, expel not Grace. That is a permanent abiding Principle in the Soul, which nothing can poſſibly eradicate. The End of God, in its Production, above mentioned, will eternally ſecure the Continuance of its Being in the Heart, againſt all Oppoſition whatſoever *.

III. This

* If any ſhould object to this, and ſay, an Act of Sin in the Non-elect Angels, expelled out of them that Holineſs, which was con-created with them: And an Act of Sin in *Adam* expelled out of him that Holineſs, which was con-created with him, why therefore, may it not be concluded, that ſinful Actions in a Believer may poſſibly expel Grace out of his Heart, or cauſe it to become extinct? I would anſwer thus: God, in endowing thoſe Angels with Holineſs, in their Creation, did not intend, that they ſhould enjoy Himſelf for ever, by Means there-

III. This holy, ſpiritual, and ſupernatural Principle cannot be acquired. No holy Acts can be exerted, in a Mind deſtitute of Holineſs. Such as Faith, Repentance, and evangelical Obedience. Hence our Lord ſays: *No*

of. Not did He deſign that *Adam* ſhould enjoy Himſelf for ever, by Means of that Holineſs wherewith he endowed him in his Creation. But it is his Deſign, that Believers ſhould enjoy Himſelf for ever, by means of that Holineſs, wherewith He endows them in their new Creation. And therefore, though thoſe Angels loſt their Holineſs, and *Adam* alſo loſt his, which was con-created with him, it doth not follow, that Believers may loſe thoſe gracious Habits, or that holy Principle, with which they are endowed in their new Creation. Again, the Divine Nature in Believers, never concurs with the Fleſh in Acts of Sin; but luſteth againſt it. And the Prevalence of the Fleſh againſt that Nature, effects no Change in it, for it ſtill remains what it was. And the Continuance of its Being in the Soul depends not upon his Acts; but abſolutely on the Will of God, who infuſed or created it. If indeed, God created this Principle without an Intention, that by means of it, thoſe, in whom it is, ſhould enjoy Himſelf for ever; it might become extinct. But as He did create it with ſuch an Intention, it cannot. Or, if this Principle itſelf were to ſin, or if the Mind, according to this Principle were to ſin, its Nature would thereupon be changed, or it would become extinct; but that it doth not, nor ever will. Hence with reſpect unto it, the Apoſtle ſays: *It is no more I that do it; but ſin, that dwelleth in me.* Upon the whole, I think, it may be concluded ſafely, that holy Habits created of God, with a Purpoſe, that by Means thereof, thoſe, in whom they are, may come to the bliſsful Enjoyment of Himſelf, can never be loſt, through any Cauſe whatſoever.

No Man can come to me except the Father, which hath ſent me, draw him (s). And the Apoſtle affirms that *the carnal Mind is not ſubject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be (t)*; and that, *without Faith, it is impoſſible to pleaſe God (u).* There are many Profeſſors, who cannot bear to hear it aſſerted, that Men unregenerate, are incapable to act a Part, pleaſing and acceptable to God. Let ſuch Perſons ſpeak out, and tell us whether it is lawful for us to make uſe of, and explain theſe Texts in our Bibles, or not. There is Reaſon to think, that if the Lord Jeſus Chriſt was now upon Earth, and they were to hear Him expreſs Himſelf, as He did, in relation to this Subject, they would cenſure Him for it. Their Cenſuring of us for aſſerting this Inability of unregenerate Men, gives us no other Concern, than what ariſes from this Conſideration, that through others, they cenſure our bleſſed Lord Himſelf, and His Apoſtles, who ſpake, as they were dictated by the Spirit of Chriſt. Men cannot be aſſiſted to acquire this Principle of Holineſs, and ſpiritual Life. He who is dead cannot be enabled to put forth vital Acts. And he who is blind, that is to ſay, is deſtitute of a viſive Faculty, cannot be helped to ſee. Natural Men are dead, deſtitute of a Principle of ſpiritual Life, and of a ſpiritual

(s) John vi. 44. (t) Rom. viii. 7.
(u) Heb. xi. 6.

tual viſive Faculty, and therefore, they cannot be enabled to act, or to ſee in a ſpiritual Manner.

It is unreaſonable to think, that the Mind, as carnal, can be influenced unto holy Acts. The Fleſh is only and entirely engaged in the Service of Sin. And it perpetually luſteth againſt the Spirit in Believers. It concurs not with the gracious Principle, in the Saints, in any of its Actings; but ever oppoſes it. Hence there is a Tincture of Evil in all the holy Actings of their Minds, and in all the Duties which they perform. By reaſon of the perpetual Preſence of Evil in them, they ſin in Meditation, Prayer, Reading, Hearing, and in every other religious Exerciſe. The ſad Experience of Believers, is a ſtanding Evidence of the Truth thereof. How then, can it be ſuppoſed, that thoſe, who only have Fleſh in them, may be excited to exert holy Acts, in order to acquire a holy Principle? If the Fleſh in unregenerate Men may be enabled to put forth holy Acts: Surely it may be brought to concur with the Spirit, in its Acts, in the Regenerate; but that is falſe, both Scripture, and the Experience of all the Saints teſtify. And, therefore, it is impoſſible, that it ſhould be enabled by any Aids whatſoever, to act in a holy, ſpiritual Manner. And, conſequently, no Man, who is in the Fleſh, or in an unregenerate State, can be enabled to exert holy Acts, whereby

whereby a holy Principle may be acquired. I would ſpeak it with Reverence, and I hope you will hear it with Reverence; *Omnipotence itſelf cannot cauſe Enmity to Love.* For, that implies a Contradiction. And as the carnal Mind is Enmity itſelf againſt God, it is abſolutely impoſſible to cauſe it to love Him. In our depraved Nature, there is nothing but a mere paſſive Capacity to receive a holy, ſpiritual Principle from God, in a way of Creation, or Infuſion. That is all which we can with Truth, ſay of ourſelves, as we are carnal and corrupt. The Will of the Fleſh does not, it cannot co-operate with the Grace of God, in our Regeneration. For, that would be acting contrary to its Nature. And, therefore, it cannot, even by divine Influence, be cauſed to act ſpiritually. And, conſequently, it is impoſſible, that Men, who are deſtitute of a Principle of Holineſs, ſhould be enabled to acquire ſuch a Principle. *It is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth; but of God that ſheweth Mercy.*

IV. This holy, ſpiritual, and ſupernatural Principle, is the Gift of God. He is the ſole Author, and efficient Cauſe of it. Hence the new Birth is always aſcribed to Him. The Saints are ſaid to *be born of God. To be born of the Spirit. Which were born, not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Fleſh, nor of the Will of Man;*

Man, but of God. That which is born of the Flesh, is Flesh: That which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit. So is every one that is born of the Spirit. God of his abundant Mercy begets us again. Of his own Will begat He us. This Principle is a *good, and perfect Gift, which cometh down from above, from the Father of Lights.* With respect to Faith, the Apostle asserts negatively, that it is not of ourselves: And he affirms positively, that it is the Gift of God. *By Grace are we saved through Faith, that not of ourselves, it is the Gift of God.* And declares to the *Ephesians*, that we are, as Saints, the Workmanship of God. *For we are the Workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works.* This Principle, therefore, is a divine Gift, and is not acquired, by those in whom it is. It is so the Gift of God, that the Subjects of it had not, nor could have the least causal Influence in its Production. For this Principle, is not only superior unto, and above all that was in them before, in its Nature; but also, it is absolutely contrary to the natural Disposition of their Minds. And, consequently, it must have been produced in them by divine Grace, without any concurrent Act of their Will therein, or in order thereunto. It is unreasonable to suppose, that one contrary, is capable of exerting Acts, which tend to the Production of another. Is not the Flesh contrary to the Spirit? It is. And is not the

the Spirit contrary to the Flesh? It is. And they counter-act one another perpetually. And, therefore, this holy, spiritual, and supernatural Principle, must be a divine Gift, in the most full, and absolute Sense. It is a new Life in the Soul, which was dead before. And it is as much the Gift of God, as Life is, which is communicated to a Man, who before, was dead naturally. As a Man who is naturally dead, cannot contribute to the Production of Life in himself: So such who are dead in Sin, can contribute nothing to the Production of a vital Principle of Holiness, in themselves. If God doth not graciously give to them such a Principle, they will eternally remain destitute of it: Or continue dead in Trespasses and Sins for evermore. For, as hath been before observed, they cannot possibly be assisted to acquire it. As a Man naturally dead cannot be enabled to acquire Life: So one who is dead in Sin, cannot be assisted to acquire this new, and heavenly Life.

V. The Lord gives this Ability to some, and not to others, according to His sovereign Pleasure.

God is not under Obligation to communicate Holiness to any sinful Creature. He bestows His Grace upon, or withholds it from fallen Creatures, as He Himself is pleased to determine. But the Exercise of His So-

vereignty, in diſpenſing His Grace, Men cannot bear with. If He will give Grace to ſome, and not to others, they will *impiouſly* dare to reproach Him to His Face, on Account thereof. But let them know this, that they muſt one Day be accountable to Him for it. Men allow one another to do what they pleaſe with their own. To beſtow their Favours on whom they think proper. On this Perſon, and not on another. Yet they will not allow that Liberty to their Maker. On the contrary, if He beſtows what is abſolutely His own, on ſome, and not on others, they will cenſure Him for it. Which is moſt unreaſonable Impiety in them. If Grace is not God's own, and at His ſovereign Diſpoſal, He hath nothing that is ſo, For, what Claim, can an unholy Creature have upon God to communicate Holineſs to him? If you ſhall ſay, that it is fit, convenient, and becoming, that God ſhould beſtow Grace upon, or communicate Holineſs unto a lapſed Creature, I will prove, that He cannot but give Grace to apoſtate Spirits, and unto Men univerſally. If you enquire how. I anſwer thus: God cannot omit doing what is fit, convenient, and becoming, that He ſhould do it. And, therefore, if it is fit, convenient, and becoming, that He ſhould communicate Holineſs to a fallen Creature, he cannot but beſtow his Grace upon, or communicate Holineſs, unto apoſtate Spirits and Men

Men univerſally, without Diſtinction, or Difference. The Reaſon is moſt clear, which is this: It is not poſſible with God, ever to omit doing, what it is fit, proper, and becoming, He ſhould do. As it is impoſſible with Him to do what is improper, unfit, and unbecoming, that He ſhould do it. So, it is impoſſible with Him not to do what is fit, proper, and becoming, that He ſhould do it. Since, therefore, He does not beſtow His Grace upon, or make all His fallen Creatures Partakers of His Holineſs; but ſome only: It is evident, that the Reaſon why He beſtows His Grace upon ſome, is not becauſe it was fit, convenient, and becoming, that ſo He ſhould do; but becauſe ſuch was His ſovereign Pleaſure, concerning them. He was at full Liberty to diſpenſe Grace to *Paul*, and not to *Pharaoh*: To communicate Holineſs to *Peter*, and not to *Judas*. Becauſe, the Communication of Holineſs unto, or the Beſtowment of Grace upon an unholy Creature, is not due from God, by Reaſon it is fit, that He ſhould beſtow it. And, therefore, to make a ſinful Creature holy, by a Communication of Grace and Holineſs, is a pure ſovereign Act of God; if it is not, no divine Act is ſuch. If it is not free with God, to love, do Good unto, and render eternally happy, guilty and ſinful Creatures, or the contrary, as He Himſelf, pleaſes to determine, in nothing can His

Will be at Liberty, in his Reſolutions about them. Our bleſſed Lord reſolves this wholly into the ſovereign Pleaſure of his divine Father, when He addreſſes Him thus: *Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, I thank Thee, that Thou haſt hid theſe things from the Wiſe and Prudent, and haſt revealed them unto Babes: Even ſo Father, for ſo it ſeemed good in Thy ſight.*

When ſpiritual Things are ſaid to be hid from the Wiſe and Prudent, by God, The Meaning is not, that He took from them their natural Power of Underſtanding: Nor, that He did not externally reveal thoſe Things unto them. For they had an external Revelation of them, as well as the Babes. But the Meaning is plainly this; He did not give to them, a Capacity to underſtand thoſe Things, which He did give to Babes, who were much their Inferiors in natural Knowledge, becauſe ſuch was His Pleaſure: And no other Cauſe can be aſſigned why heavenly Things were concealed from the former, as to their Nature, and made known to the latter; but the ſovereign Will of God.

I hope it appears, that Believers are the Subjects of a holy, ſpiritual, and ſupernatural Principle.—That this Principle cannot be acquired.—That it is the Gift of God; and that he gives it to ſome, and not to others, according to His ſovereign Pleaſure. Some Obſervations may now be made.

Obſerv.

Obser. I. Hence we may easily see, that the Irresistibility of divine Grace, is consistent with our natural Freedom, or the natural Liberty of our Will. For,

(1.) The Will is entirely passive, in the Infusion, or Creation of this Principle. It is not actively concerned therein. The Will holds itself absolutely inactive in the Infusion of this spiritual Principle. It neither chuses, nor refuses: Neither concurs, nor oppoſes, in this divine Work upon the Soul. The Nature of the Thing is a full Evidence thereof. For it is the Communication of a Principle of Life to the Soul, which is dead in Sin, and, therefore, it is impoſſible that the Mind ſhould exert any concurrent, or oppoſing Act therein. The natural Liberty of the Will, therefore, cannot be infringed, in the Infuſion of this Principle.

(2.) By the Creation of this Principle in the Heart, the Will is ſanctified, and becomes habitually inclined to Holineſs, in Conſequence of this Work upon the Soul. And, therefore, as there is a Diſpoſition in the Will of Believers to Acts of Sin, as it is corrupt: So, there is a Diſpoſition in their Will to Holineſs, as it is ſanctified by the Infuſion of this Principle. And their Choice of Evil is free, and their Choice of Good is voluntary. For, the Will ſuffers no Violence, in acting agreeably to the Nature of

of the evil, or good Diſpoſition, whereof it is the Subject. The effectual Influences of divine Grace upon the Will, as ſanctified, are no other, than exciting it to ſuch Acts, as it hath an habitual Diſpoſition unto. It is, therefore, abſurd to conceive, that thoſe Influences put any Force upon the Will. It is undoubtedly free, in acting agreeably to the Nature of that holy Diſpoſition, whereof it is the Subject, though it is by the Grace of God ſtirred up, ſo to act. Theſe Things are obſerved, by Doctor *Preſton*, in a Latin Oration, which he delivered in the Univerſity of *Cambridge*. Which Oration, for its *Conciſeneſs*, *Perſpicuity*, and *nervous Reaſoning*, is moſt worthy to be read.

II. Theſe Things will enable us to ſet the Doctrine of Election, in a very familiar and unexceptionable Light. For, it is no other, than the eternal Purpoſe of God, to give Grace to ſome, which no ſinful Mortal upon Earth hath a Right to claim of his Maker. Let us conſider this Point calmly and ſeriouſly. As we are depraved, we are unmeet for, and indiſpoſed unto preſent Communion with God, and the Enjoyment of Him, hereafter. And we are ſo far from being worthy of His Favour, that we are juſtly deſerving of His Vengeance. Is He then obliged to give us Grace to fit us for preſent Communion with Him, and the

everlaſting Enjoyment of Himſelf hereafter? Who will dare to ſay, that God is under ſuch an Obligation, to any guilty Creature? And if He is not, then he may beſtow His Grace upon us, or not, as He Himſelf pleaſes. And if the actual Beſtowment of Grace upon us, is what God may do, or not do. Surely He was fully at Liberty, to determine, in his everlaſting Counſels, on whom He would beſtow His Grace, and on whom He would not. Now, as Election is God's eternal Purpoſe to communicate Holineſs to thoſe, who are the Objects of that Decree, to fit them for Communion with Him here, and for the Enjoyment of Himſelf hereafter. This His Determination concerning them, was ſuch an Act, as He was not obliged unto, with reſpect to any ſinful Creature. And, therefore, it was abſolutely free with Him, to fix on the Particular Perſons, unto whom He would communicate His Grace. It is evident, that Election is no other than ſuch a Purpoſe in the divine Mind. For, our holy Vocation, is according to God's Purpoſe. *We are ſaved, and called with an holy Calling, according to his own Purpoſe and Grace, which was given us, in Chriſt, before the World began.* If God in Time, may ſanctify whom He pleaſes, by His Spirit, it muſt have been abſolutely free with Him, to chuſe whom He would, to Salvation through Sanctification of the Spi-

rit.

ri. As the Lord in Time, may do that in favour of ſome, which He is not under the leaſt Obligation to do in favour of any: So he might in Eternity, form ſuch a Reſolution, and He actually did. Which Act was the Election of thoſe Perſons, unto a Participation of His Holineſs here, in order unto the future Enjoyment of Himſelf.

Obſerv. III. Hence we learn, that it is not acting a phariſaical and legal Part, to look into ourſelves, for Holineſs, in order to our Conſolation, and to give Praiſe to God, for what He has wrought in us. Some cenſure ſo doing, as Phariſaiſm and Legality, under a high Pretence of Zeal, for the Doctrine of imputed Righteouſneſs. As if conſidering with ourſelves, whether we are the Subjects of Sanctification, was inconſiſtent with a Dependence on the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt for Juſtification. If I am not the Subject of Holineſs, what Evidence can I poſſibly have, that I am the Object of Juſtification? If indeed, we taught Men, that they are to look into themſelves for Holineſs, in order to encourage them to truſt in the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt for Acceptance, they would be furniſhed with Matter of juſt Objection. But no orthodox ſound Divine, who underſtands himſelf, does ſo teach. The Reaſon why I depend upon the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt is, I ſee the Neceſſity of an Intereſt in it,

it, and the Glory of it, and not becauſe I am made holy by the Grace of God. Theſe are Things moſt clearly diſtinct, and eaſily to be diſtinguiſhed. And yet, there are ſome it ſeems, even among ourſelves, and who are Maſters, in our *Iſrael*, who cannot, or will not diſtinguiſh them. I hope you will excuſe my familiar way of ſpeaking; theſe things are but A, B, C, in Divinity. Heart-work is become the Subject of Sneer. And, Dr *Owen*, whoſe experimental, and practical Writings, will, I am of Opinion, render his Memory precious, as long as ſpiritual ſavoury Chriſtians ſhall ſubſiſt, is charged, with having *much ſelf-righteous* Chaff, on Account of them. This is that ſad Paſs unto which Things are now arrived with ſome amongſt us. For my Part, I am free to declare to all the World, that as on one Hand, I care not in the leaſt, by whom, I am repreſented as an *Antinomian*, for preaching the diſtinguiſhing Doctrines of the Goſpel: So, on the other, I ſhall never be concerned by whomſoever I am cenſured, as a Phariſee and Legaliſt, for recommending, experimental, and practical Religion. A late learned Writer militates againſt the Doctrine I have advanced, in a Diſcourſe on the Words of my Text. And objects, as follows,

Object. 1. *Nothing can be more inconſiſtent with the perfect Goodneſs, and Juſtice of the di-*

pine Being.—Is it the Character of infinite Goodneſs to injoin Men what is above their Abilities, and not to give them proportionable Strength, if their Duty does, in any particular Circumſtances, exceed the Meaſure of their Capacity? Does it become a Being of perfect Juſtice to puniſh Men for not doing what is above their Strength, and what he never intended they ſhould do *?

I *anſwer*; Mens Inability for the Performance of their Duty, is the Conſequence of Sin. This arguing, therefore, is no other than this: A Maſter is neither good, nor juſt, who blames his Servant for not performing his Duty, when he is incapable of it, though his being ſo, is the Effect of a Debauch, or Intemperance. This reaſoning, though often uſed, is below Men of Senſe and Learning.

Object. 2. *It is no leſs diſagreeable to the Kindneſs, which God had ſhewn this People, and to the whole Courſe of his Providence towards them, than it is to his own Perfections* †.

Anſw. Arguing from the Goodneſs of God, towards that People, in the Courſe of his Providence, to prove an Intention in Him, to make them holy and eternally happy, is inconcluſive and impertinent. And His giving them excellent Laws, is no Proof, that He gave them

* Vol. of Sermons, by Mr *Joſeph Morris*, Page 267.

† Page 267.

them an Ability to yield ſpiritual Obedience to His Commands.

Object. 3. *This Senſe will not agree with the End of Moſes in ſpeaking to them, nor with the other Parts of his Diſcourſe. His Deſign manifeſtly was to move them to a ſerious Conſideration of their paſt Sins, that they might repent of them, and make this Covenant with a hearty Reſolution not to rebel againſt God, as they had often done; but to continue obedient to his Voice, that they might enjoy the promiſed Land. How could he hope to work them into a godly Sorrow for their paſt Tranſgreſſions, or a firm Reſolution of acting better, by affirming, that God had not given them Ability to keep his Commandments?—Beſides, this makes Moſes contradict himſelf, for he plainly declares in the next Words, that God deſigned they ſhould know and obey his Will.*—That ye might know that I am the Lord your God *.

Anſw. Spiritual Bleſſings were not promiſed in this Covenant. Nor was a ſpiritual Obedience required of the People therein. No other than temporal Favours were promiſed, in that Covenant. And no other than an external Obedience was required of the People therein, which they, as Men, without ſanctifying Grace, were capable of yielding. And ſometimes they did externally obey thoſe Laws, which God gave them, then it went well with them. But when they rebelled, it went ill with them. And a ſpi-

* *Ibid.* 269, 270.

ritual Knowledge of God is not deſigned; but a natural Knowledge of Him, as Creator, and their Preſerver, and a bountiful Benefactor to them, as a Nation. And, therefore, *Moſes* is far from contradicting himſelf, in affirming, that God had not given them an Heart to perceive, Eyes to ſee, Ears to hear in a ſpiritual Senſe.

The learned Man ſeems to diſapprove of our Tranſlation, and to prefer a different one. The *Septuagint*, and all antient Tranſlations, the *vulgate Latin*, and *Junius*, read the Words negatively, as we do. *The Lord hath not given.* He obſerves, that the *Hebrew* Particle, לֹא is ſometimes uſed in an interrogative Senſe, the Prefix ה being underſtood: And, is for reading the Words thus: *And hath not the Lord given you an Heart to perceive, and Eyes to ſee, and Ears to hear?* The Meaning of which is, according to the Uſe of ſuch Interrogations; *and God hath given you an Heart to perceive, and Eyes to ſee, Ears to hear,* even to this Time.

I *anſwer*, This Part is often acted by thoſe who differ from us. *Hebrew* Particles, and *Greek* Prepoſitions, are a large Field wherein they exerciſe their critical Skill, in order to pervert the Scripture. It is freely granted, that the *Hebrew* Particle, is ſometimes ſo tranſlated, where the Scope and Subject of the Writer require it. But that is no Proof that it ſhould be thus rendered, in theſe Words.

For

For being negatively taken it ſupplies no ill Senſe: Or which is contrary to other Parts of Scripture and the Analogy of Faith. And, therefore, our Verſion may juſtly be allowed.

Allowing our Tranſlation, he ſays, *It is abſurd to ſuppoſe he (Moſes) means, that God had not given them a Capacity to underſtand, conſider, and obey his Will, for then he could not have juſtly blamed them for not doing better; but that they had as little reflected upon the Wonders they had ſeen; and obſerved the Precepts given them, as if God had not bleſſed them with theſe Faculties, but they were quite blind and deaf* *.

Anſw. 1. It is abſurd to conceive that God may not juſtly blame Men for not perfectly performing His Will, though to them it is impoſſible, through an Inability, which attends them: Becauſe their Incapacity to yield perfect Obedience to God's Commands, is the Effect of Sin. That Incapacity, therefore is no Excuſe for their Defects in Obedience.

2. It is a very forced and unnatural Senſe, which the learned Man puts upon the Text. *Moſes* ſays, *The Lord hath not given you an Heart to perceive.* That is to ſay, according to this Writer: "You have not well uſed thoſe Powers, wherewith God hath endowed you; but have acted, as if you had them not." What can be more unnatural than this? The Words of *Moſes*, expreſs what God had not

* Page 278.

not done; but it ſeems, they are to be underſtood of what this People had not done. He ſpeaks of God indeed; but in Fact he hath no Regard to him, he wholly and only reſpects the People. This is not to interpret, but contradict the Scripture.

He adds: *An Heart to perceive, Eyes to ſee, and Ears to hear, may denote an underſtanding Heart, ſeeing Eyes, and hearing Ears; not a bare Faculty of perceiving, ſeeing, and hearing; but a good Diſpoſition to underſtand and obey, acquired by that Faculty* *.

Anſw. 1. An evil Heart cannot exert good Acts, whereby a good Diſpoſition may be acquired. The Hearts of all Men are naturally evil and *deſperately wicked*, how, therefore, is it poſſible, for them to put forth good Acts, in order to acquire a good Diſpoſition? It is as reaſonable to think, that an evil Tree may bear good Fruit: Or a bitter Fountain may ſend forth ſweet Streams, which all know to be impoſſible.

2. According to what is here ſaid, the meaning of *Moſes* muſt be this, when he ſays, *the Lord hath not given you, &c.* Ye have not acquired an underſtanding Heart, ſeeing Eyes, and hearing Ears. He affirms what God had not done for this People; but he does not mean as he ſpeaks; his Meaning is, what they had not done for themſelves. Can greater Violence be offered to Language than this

* Page 278.

this is? God hath not given, *Moſes* ſays; but he means, ye have not acquired; as this Author will have it. *Moſes* ſays one Thing; but means quite another. And deſigns to expreſs what the People had not done, by aſſerting what God had not done.

Farther, the Author obſerves: That *Moſes ſays not that God had denied them a Capacity and Means ſufficient to underſtand and do his Will; but that he had not given them an underſtanding Heart, and an obedient Will, or had not made them wiſe and good Men* *.

Anſw. 1. Men deſtitute of ſpiritual Wiſdom and Goodneſs, are incapable of underſtanding and doing the Will of God in an acceptable manner.

2. The Author's Meaning is not, that God makes Men wiſe and good; but that thoſe, who are wiſe and good, have made themſelves ſo, by a proper Uſe of ſuch Means as he afforded them for that Purpoſe, when they had no ſpiritual Wiſdom, or Goodneſs, in them. So that it is ſuppoſed, or taken for granted, that Men may act wiſely, before they have Wiſdom, and do that which is good, before they have Goodneſs in them. Whereupon, and in Conſequence of which, they become wiſe and good. If this is true, then thoſe *who are in the Fleſh may pleaſe God.*

He proceeds thus: *When it is ſaid, that God had not given theſe Bleſſings, this is not to be underſtood*

* Page 279.

underſtood of his Intention, as if he was not willing to give them; but may be underſtood of the Event only, that he had not actually given them, whatever was the Cauſe. That is ſaid to be given, which is accepted; and that not to be given, which is refuſed by him, to whom it was offered.—God was willing to give them true Wiſdom, and to have made them virtuous and happy Men; but they wickedly refuſed his Gifts.—The only Cauſe why God does not actually beſtow theſe Things, is Mens wilful neglect of Means, and wickedly reſiſting his Grace *.

Anſw. 1. This Diſcourſe ſuppoſes, that God was prevented doing what He really intended to do, through their Obſtinacy and Perverſeneſs. His Will, therefore, was reſiſted, or overcome, by their ſtubborn and perverſe Will. Which the divine Will never can be in any Inſtance. For, *who hath reſiſted His Will?*

2. It is taken for granted, without offering the leaſt Proof, that Men may act wiſely, and make Choice of Holineſs, before they are wiſe and holy. Than which, there is nothing more falſe. Full Proof, I hope, is given thereof, above. Yea, that no Aid whatſoever, can aſſiſt the carnal Mind to become ſubject to the Law of God. And, therefore, no Acts of Holineſs can be exerted, by an unregenerate Man.

3. The

* Page 279, 280.

3. The Will of Man, in Regeneration is wholly paſſive. It neither wills, nor nills. It neither concurs with divine Grace therein, nor oppoſes. Nor is it poſſible that it ſhould. For, no Propoſal is made to the Mind, whether it will receive a holy, and gracious Diſpoſition, or not. Such a Diſpoſition, or a Principle of Holineſs, is immediately, and imperceptibly created, or infuſed into the Soul. The Will, therefore, hath not an Opportunity of exerting itſelf, either in a way of Choice, or Refuſal.

4. If that is true, which this Writer pleads for, the Holineſs and Happineſs of Men, is, at leaſt, as much owing to themſelves, as to the Grace of God. For, divine Grace, according to his Sentiments, cannot be effectual, without the Concurrence of the human Will. And our Holineſs and Happineſs, muſt ultimately be reſolved, into our Will, as the Cauſe thereof, and not the Will of God. And, therefore, boaſting, in ourſelves, upon this Principle, is not, nor can be excluded. Wherefore, this Doctrine is repugnant to the Scripture, which excludes all boaſting in Men. As to Holineſs, we are nothing cauſally; but by the Grace of God, we are what we are. Unto Him, therefore, let us ever aſcribe the Glory.

F I N I S.